1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia

Sandfly

SANDFLY, ABOUT NINE MILES SOUTHEAST OF SAVANnah, is a scattered Negro community spreading through the hot pine barrens to the Isle of Hope. There is nothing unusual or outstanding about the sleepy little settlement; its three hundred inhabitants appear to lead a placid, uneventful existence.

Many of the houses are situated on a side road which leads to the Isle of Hope. Modern conveniences are lacking, but the nondescript dwellings are brightened by flower gardens in the front yards, while small truck gardens occupy the space to the rear and sides. The more substantial houses of the more prosperous citizens are set deep in the wooded sections and are reached by means of narrow winding paths bordered with giant moss-hung oak trees.

Usually life in Sandfly flows along pleasantly and without serious interruption. Even in the morning men and women sit around on porches or in yards, sometimes talking, sometimes dozing in the sun. The more industrious are at work in the gardens or may be seen through doors busily occupied in washing or ironing clothes. Many of the men are employed as fishermen or day laborers, and the women who work out are generally engaged as house servants in homes at near-by Isle of Hope.

At first residents of the community were reluctant to talk about their superstitions and beliefs and their knowledge of conjure. Their customary response when first approached was a laconic, "No, ma'am, I ain got no fait in sech tings as

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
Johns Island

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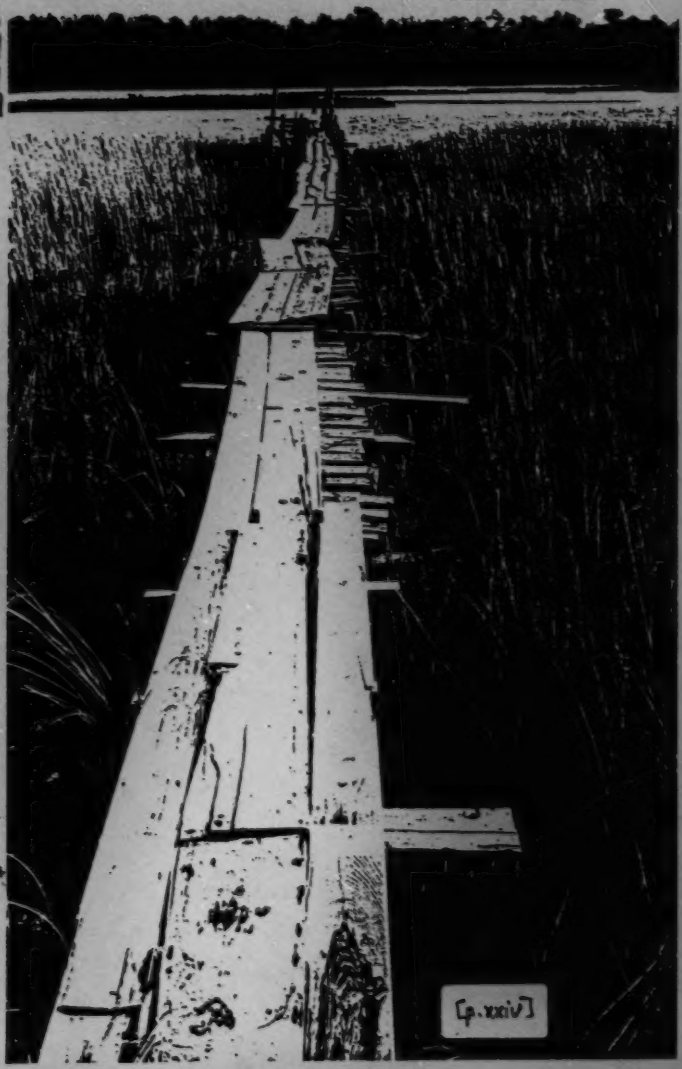
137
417
489



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9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
Georgia
St. Simon's Island

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961
[487]

in her *Journal*, gave several illustrations which show how anything was grist for the Negroes' song-mill. With the rivers affording the only means of travel, it was natural that she should hear rowing songs of all kinds; and on one occasion she had the unique privilege of hearing her own praises extemporaneously chanted by her two Negro boatmen. They described her personal attractions, and amused her intensely by their repeated references to her "wire waist." [4]

Today the Negroes are less inventive, and generally confine themselves to a substitution of names or familiar lines in the old songs, but we can still hear examples of the way they utilized incidents or phrases that struck their fancy. If a captain said: "It's rough going 'round the Horn," the Negroes made up a song about the statement, and we had: "Go 'round the Horn, Yalla gal, Go 'round the Horn!" "Ragged Leevy," a waterfront character of Brunswick, was described in the shanty that bears his name. "Little Johnny Brown, fines' cap'n on Doboy Sound," was so popular among the stevedores that he figured in one of their jolliest shanties; and "Yonder come that *Hessie*" always brings a regretful feeling to those of us who remember the "good old days" on St. Simon's when the *Hessie* was our means of communication with the outside world, and the captain obligingly did our errands.

In our machine age it is inevitable that these work-songs should pass. Before they have entirely disappeared, records should be made of the few examples that have survived.

SHANTIES

If anyone needs more information about the use of these shanties, I suggest that he apply to either Joe Armstrong or Henry Merchant of St. Simon's Island. Both were at one time leaders of stevedore crews, and both have told me the uses to which the different songs were put. Since I am a land-lubber and more interested in music than in the mechanics of loading lumber and stowing cotton, details concerning the latter have not stuck, while the tunes have—to the last note. Any mistake in describing their application is mine, not Joe's or Henry's.

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In the early days of the lumber industry, great rafts of logs were nailed together, and—with two or three men in charge—were drifted down the Altamaha to the mills at its mouth.[5] Ships from everywhere came for the sawed lumber. Julia once

[4] African explorers with more knowledge of the native dialect than their boatmen realized were often entertained in the same manner, but their defects—not their charms—were derisively enumerated.

[5] Fanny Kemble mentions in her Journal that on one of her boat-trips from Darien she saw "The river . . . covered with Ocone [river] bones." She describes them as monstrous square

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930
(1525-ca. 1880)
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23
South Carolina
St. Helena Island

arrives at his destination, for St. Helena is the buffer between two other islands and the Atlantic. Long bridges span these rivers now so that one may go all the way by automobile, but until 1927 one could cross Beaufort River, the largest of the three, only by means of a bateau which operated as a casual ferry between Beaufort and Ladies Island. But in the days when transportation was chiefly by water, these very rivers, which are now so difficult to span, were one of the chief assets of the region.

THE FRANCO-SPANISH CONTEST

The Spanish were the first to claim the St. Helena region both by exploration and by occupation. Spain, indeed, shows a record of one hundred and forty-two years of activity in this territory[3] before 1663 when King Charles II of England by letters patent included it in a grant to eight Lords Proprietors and delivered it to one hundred years of protested ownership before England finally gained a clear title to the region by the Treaty of 1763. In 1521 Francisco Gordillo and Pedro de Quexos, Spaniards, reconnoitered the South Atlantic seaboard, and after Quexos' expedition for Lucas Vasques de Ayllon in 1525, Santa Elena, as the Spanish came to call this section, was the most northern frontier of their Atlantic coastal region.

When Jean Ribaut explored this same region for Admiral de Coligny in 1562 and built Charlesfort on what is now Parris Island,[4] he called the vicinity Port Royal, the name which the English later adopted. Ribaut's fort

[3] Mary Ross, "The Spanish Settlement of Santa Elena (Port Royal) in 1578," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, IX, 352.

[4] Parris Island lies across Beaufort River from St. Helena Island.